

**Plain Language: The Art of the Message**

**Simple ways to tighten up your writing:  
words and phrases to eliminate**

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(EDITOR'S NOTE: **Business communications has never been more complicated - Cell phones, video conferencing, e-mails, web content, correspondence, reports and presentations cause even the greatest writer or orator to stir with apprehension that their message is clearly understood. Each month this column will explore the many different ways each of us can learn to communicate more plainly.**)

**Pop Quiz!** Can you translate into "plain language" each of the following sentences? Answers are at the bottom.

1. Due to circumstances beyond the control of management, it is has come to our attention that the information technology infrastructure of the agency is currently compromised and will be temporarily inaccessible to on-staff associates for the remainder of the workday.
2. All managers of the agency are encouraged to address the issue of workforce retention during the retreat during the month of October. A number of reasons for seeking other employment were ascertained during a recent survey tool administered to the organization. The purpose of the retreat is to affect modifications in the hiring and retention process in an effort to retain qualified personnel and afford the opportunity of long-term employment to those seeking a career in state government.
3. During a disaster, all staff members are to exit the premises in an expeditious fashion if the building is impacted due to negative consequences such as flooding, electrical outage, or a tornado. It is incumbent upon staff to ascertain the protocol outlined specifically for their office unit if it becomes appropriate to seek refuge in an alternative work location.

Now, don't worry. These are not actual KDHE examples of biz-speak, but examples I have made up. A bit exaggerated? Yes...but I am trying to make a point here: Not all words are necessary. Longer sentences are not necessarily better. Short and simple language is much easier to understand.

- Continued -

The following are some common words and phrases that you can almost always eliminate or replace in your written communication.

**INSTEAD OF:**

accompany  
accordingly  
a number of  
approximate  
as a means of  
ascertain  
at the present time  
close proximity  
due to the fact that  
during the period  
expeditious  
in accordance with  
in a timely manner  
incumbent upon  
in order to  
in the amount of  
in the event of  
is responsible for  
numerous  
provides guidance for  
pursuant to  
set forth in  
subsequent  
sufficient  
the month of  
time period  
under the provisions of  
until such time as  
with reference to  
with the exception of

**TRY:**

go with  
so  
some  
about  
to  
find out, learn  
now  
near  
due to, since  
during  
quick, fast  
by, following, per, under  
on time, promptly  
must  
to  
for  
if  
handles  
many  
guides  
by, following, per, under  
in  
later, next  
enough  
(omit)  
(either one)  
under  
until  
about  
except for

This is just a small sampling of words and phrases to eliminate or replace in written communication. For a complete list, visit: <http://www.plainlanguage.gov/>.

**Pop Quiz answers:**

1. The computer system is down for the rest of the day.
2. Managers will discuss staff retention at the retreat.
3. Staff should follow the disaster protocol when evacuating the building in an emergency.